

THE LARGE COPPER, *LYCAENA DISPAR DISPAR*
(HAWORTH) IN THE NORFOLK BROADS

By A. G. IRWIN*

In August 1980, a cabinet of Lepidoptera was included in an auction at Aylsham, Norfolk. I went to view the cabinet before the auction and was rewarded with the discovery of a pair of *Lycaena dispar* apparently from the Norfolk Broads. The ensuing bids for the cabinet went above my limit but I was able to contact the new owner who proved most helpful and allowed me to borrow the pair of *dispar* for closer examination.

The male, labelled "Ranworth Nfk 1860 WB", and female, labelled "Woodbastwick 1864 WB", both fall within the range of variation exhibited by 22 specimens of *L. dispar dispar* in the Norwich museum collection. They are certainly not of continental origin.

The cabinet was sold by Mr. T. L. Brayne of Fakenham, Norfolk and the specimens in it were collected by his mother, Iris G. Brayne (nee Bolding) and his great-uncle, William Bolding. Only seven specimens, apart from the *dispar*, have data labels and these give the locality, the initials "IGB" and a year between 1884 and 1918. The *dispar* labels are in the same format and hand as these labels. Clearly it was Iris Brayne who wrote and placed the labels on the *dispar*.

The distribution of *L. dispar dispar* before its extinction in the middle of the last century is summarised in Dennis (1977). The butterfly was centred on the fens of Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire and West Norfolk, but also occurred in Lincolnshire, Somerset and Monmouthshire, and there is a record from Benacre, East Suffolk. Tutt (1906) cites then dismisses the only published reference to *dispar* in the Norfolk Broads. Winter (1858) records: "This species has again appeared in the fens here [Ranworth]; I saw four yesterday but missed them all." Tutt's reason for doubting Winter's record seems to be that it appeared among a rash of sightings of *dispar* from Cumberland to Devon during the years 1856 to 1865 — when it was realised that the classic sites had gone.

I can see no reason to doubt the authenticity of Bolding's specimens. The detail of locality and date indicate that Iris Brayne transcribed rather than remembered the data when writing the new labels. If the specimens were from the Fens rather than the Broads, it is difficult to understand why they were not labelled so. Neither William Bolding nor anyone else stood to gain financially or otherwise from such deceit. I do not believe there is any question about their origin. The question that does arise is whether they represent a fugitive population that arrived from the Fens during the early

*Castle Museum, Norwich, Norfolk NR1 3JU.

nineteenth century or whether *dispar* was always present in the Broad.

If *dispar* had always been present, it is surprising that it did not come to the attention of any entomologist before 1858. However the Broad is not an easy area to work, even today, and if *dispar* had a restricted distribution then it may have been overlooked. The fact that the Cambridgeshire Fens were more accessible to most entomologists in Britain may well have contributed to its apparent absence from the Broad.

Although it is usually a sedentary species there is evidence that *dispar* can travel considerable distances (Heal, 1970) and it is possible that a population in the Broad could have become established in the first half of the nineteenth century. The introduction of *L. dispar batavus* (Oberthur) to Wheatfen Broad in 1949 (Ellis, 1965) was unsuccessful because of tidal flooding, but the butterflies did well for two seasons, and there seems to be no reason why temporary colonies of *L. dispar dispar* could not have become established in other areas. Whatever the status of *dispar* in the Broad may have been, one thing is certain — its extinction there did not result from over-collecting!

Acknowledgements

I thank M. B. Hincks of North Walsham for his generous loan of the specimens, and T. L. Brayne for valuable information about the collection.

References

- Dennis, R. L. H. 1977. *The British Butterflies. Their Origin and Establishment*. Clarendon, Oxford.
- Ellis, E. A. 1965. *The Broad*. Collins, London.
- Heal, H. 1970 *Lycaena dispar batavus* L. (Large Copper) in Ireland. An explanation *Entomologist's Rec. J. Var.* 82:31.
- Tutt, J. W. 1906. *A Natural History of the British Butterflies*. Vol. 1. Stock, London.
- Winter, W. 1958. [*Lycaena dispar* at Ranworth.]. *Ent week. Int.*, 4: 131.

THE POPLAR KITTEN: *FURCULA BIFIDA* HUFNAGEL IN ANGLESEY. — A single specimen of this species was taken by Mr. B. Cooper at our Rothamsted light trap at Beaumaris (Site No. 438, O.S. Grid Ref. SM 612 795) on Anglesey on 17/18 July 1983. This, so far as I am aware, is the first of this species to be recorded for Anglesey. — A. M. RILEY, Entomology Department, Rothamsted Experimental Station, Harpenden, Hertfordshire.